

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENDING 01706 100918Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 PM-05 NSC-05 SS-15 COME-00
EB-08 /070 W
-----019857 111007Z /23
R 100910Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4407
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, CVIS, UR, US (SVEILIS, EMIL)
SUBJ: CLOSING OF LENINGRAD UPI OFFICE

REF: STATE 086600

1. LENINGRAD BASED UPI CORRESPONDENT EMIL SVEILIS AND FAMILY DEPARTED LENINGRAD 0930 LOCAL JUNE 10 ABOARD FINNAIRFLIGHT AY 717 FOR HELSINKI. SVEILIS IS RETURNING TO U.S. WHERE HE WILL TAKE LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO WORK ON BOOK BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCES IN SOVIET UNION.
 2. WITH SVEILIS' DEPARTURE LENINGRAD UPI OFFICE, WHICH OPENED OCTOBER 9, 1976, HAS OFFICIALLY CLOSED. SVEILIS HAS ASKED SOVIET AUTHORITIES TO REMOVE ALL REMAINING COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES (TELEPHONE AND TELEX) FROM LENINGRAD UPI OFFICE ON JUNE 10.
 3. WE REGRET THAT PER REFTEL NO OTHER AMERICAN WIRE SERVICE OR NEWS AGENCY IS INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING LENINGRAD OFFICE. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS IN THE U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE AT LEAST SOME PRESS PRESENCE OUTSIDE MOSCOW AS TRADE-OFF FOR TASS
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PRESENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO AND TO GIVE ADDITIONAL BALANCE AND PERSPECTIVE TO U.S. NEWS REPORTS ON SOVIET UNION. WHILE IN GENERAL WE FAVOR STICKING TO PRINCIPLE OF STRICT RECIPROCITY BETWEEN LENINGRAD AND SAN FRANCISCO, DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO AUTHORIZE CONTINUED TASS PRESENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO RAISES LARGER POLICY QUESTIONS ON WHICH THIS POST IS NOT QUALIFIED TO

COMMENT.

4. ON BALANCE, SOVIETS SEEM TO HAVE DONE A CREDITABLE JOB IN FACILITATING SVEILIS' WORK HERE. THERE WAS INITIAL PERIOD OF HARASSMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO USUAL SOVIET BUREAUCRATIC SNAFUS AND HEADACHES AS WELL AS WHAT WAS PROBABLY EXCESSIVE INITIAL KGB INTEREST AND OVERZEALOUSNESS. AFTER HARASSMENTS OF FIRST YEAR, HOWEVER, AND PARTICULARLY ONCE SVEILIS' OFFICIAL SOVIET LIAISON CHANNELS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AND WERE FUNCTIONING, SVEILIS WAS ABLE CARRY OUT HIS WORK IN MORE OR LESS NORMAL FASHION. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED IN LATTER CONNECTION THAT SVEILIS WAS ONLY FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT--EAST OR WEST--IN LENINGRAD, AND LENINGRAD BUREAUCRACY WAS INITIALLY NOT GEARED TO HANDLE HIM. THIS RESULTED IN CERTAIN AMOUNT OF BUCK PASSING UNTIL JURISDICTIONS WERE DEFINED AND SETTLED.) SVEILIS BELIEVES THAT TRAVEL FACILITATION HAS BEEN BETTER HERE THAN FOR CORRESPONDENTS IN MOSCOW AND HE NOTED THAT ONLY TWO OF HIS TRAVEL REQUESTS WERE DENIED: ONE TO A SPORTING EVENT IN A CLOSED AREA NEAR LENINGRAD, AND THE SECOND, A "THROW AWAY REQUEST" TO VISIT SOVIET NAVAL BASE AT KRONSTADT.

5. SVEILIS, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO CONSIDERABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL STRAIN, COMPOUNDED BY HIS RELATIVE ISOLATION FROM REST OF WESTERN PRESS CORPS. IT HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEEMED TO US THAT SVEILIS' ENTHUSIASM IN PURSUING UNPOPULAR, ESPECIALLY DISSIDENT STORIES, VISIBLY WANED LAST YEAR UNDER PRESSURE OF FIRST YEAR'S HARASSMENT AND WITH EMIGRATION OR SILENCING OF SOME OF HIS MORE MILITANT AND PRODUCTIVE SOVIET DISSIDENT CONTACTS. SVEILIS ALSO WAS HANDICAPPED IN HIS WORK BY HIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, ALTHOUGH HIS FLUENT KNOWLEDGE OF LATVIAN SERVED HIM WELL IN THAT AREA. BUCHANAN

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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ISecure: 1
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